

Introduction

In the Book of Revelation, we read that we will overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and that's when we preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ – Christ crucified. But it says, *"We will overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony."* We want to share stories, testimonies... That's what testimony means... a story... of how God delivered. And the reason that we want to do that is that we know that in sharing those stories, it has a power. Some of these stories that you've heard so far are difficult. Today's story is also a story that is difficult in some ways, but we think that God pierces through any shame that has been in the past, and then this freedom comes about as we declare that. So I'm excited today for you to hear another story and to see how God delivers. If you find yourself today in a similar place, I want you to respond and to say, "I'm ready to step from where I am into the place of freedom."

This is my friend Audrey. Audrey wants to share her story today. So now Audrey was telling me that she became a Christian whenever she was a young girl but then had some really difficult and painful things that took place in her life.

Pastor Steve: So, Audrey, just tell us a little bit about that.

Audrey: Sure. I did come to know the Lord at a young age. It was a very significant experience for me, and I was very aware of His presence with me from that time on in my life. My parents both came from a heritage of just lots of brokenness. Alcoholism, infidelity, and rage were things that had been passed down, so it was kind of a chaotic life for a while. But my mom became a believer and we attended church, and that was a great joy in my life. One day, as a young girl, I was doing some house chores, and I came across a closet full of some really dark things... some items, materials, magazines of pornography. I was just eight years old at that time. I know that the moment that I saw all those things, a jolt of evil... I felt that...penetrate me from head to toe. I was very injured in my soul by that. I remember that distinctly, feeling injured and very confused. I began to really question what all that was about but I didn't tell anyone. Not long after we had started attending this church, I had a traumatic experience. We would stay for church all day. Church was in the morning and then we would have lunch and then we would have an evening service. There were some young boys there that would abuse me physically and sexually. I just really struggled. I didn't tell anyone; they threatened me that if I did, it would be a bad outcome and so I did not. In my young mind, I tried to put all this together. Little by little, I felt it was my fault, and I was very much full of shame and anxiety. I really didn't understand anything about relationships. In fact, it deadened my ability to discern good from evil from that point on. It really affected me the rest of my life after that.

Pastor Steve: Wow. Audrey, another thing that you had shared, as those things happened, that began to really affect your self-worth, your body image, but also just the way you thought about sexuality in general. But then you said also there was kind of another layer at the same time, and that was your relationship with your father. Could you maybe share a little bit about that as well?

Audrey: It did. My dad was a hard worker. He traveled quite a bit, but I longed to have a relationship with him. I saw him very briefly. I mean, very little did we ever spend time together. But on the other note, he really didn't make an effort. Again, I took that as there was something wrong with me. I felt that in some way I've got to be able to earn his love or get his attention through striving to make better grades or looking pretty or doing something that would cause him to see me, but to no avail. He did not. That was an undercurrent drive that I had; it was to try to get that love from him or find out if he loved me. That was a big deal. When I turned 15, he was diagnosed with cancer, and it was a fast-moving cancer. He was

probably sick for about a week and a half, and it was during that time that I really, really thought, "Well, now maybe we will have an opportunity to share our heart and our feelings with one another, and perhaps he will tell me his real feelings toward me. Unfortunately, he did not. I am grateful that God gave me the grace to go to him and tell him that I loved him and that was a blessing. But he did pass away on February 28th of 1981. It was a great loss for me, of course. It was kind of a twofold loss: The loss of my father but also a loss of a dream... a dream of hoping that one day I would know him and know how he felt toward me. So that left me really grasping for reasons why he didn't love me after that; it was a real loss there and misunderstanding. My identity was really warped... I guess that's the best way to say it. I just was stumbling through life. Shortly after that, I developed a really very serious eating disorder... bulimia, and then anorexia. That was about 13 years of a battle with that; a very dark time, and struggling also with very destructive relationships of dating other men who were abusive. I just was not in a very good place, and very much so in a prison of shame and self-loathing and guilt.

Pastor Steve: Even on top of that, then some of that cropped its head up again in your marriage.

Audrey: It did.

Pastor Steve: Is that right?

Audrey: Yes. I got married and, again, I was a believer so I was pursuing the things of God, but I battled also my own demons. After 20 years of marriage, some things came to light regarding my husband's involvement in pornography, and the ramifications of that were quite great. After trying to reassemble what I could, it just didn't work out. I got a call from my lawyer on February 28th (another February 28th—25 years later) in 2006, and was told to come down to the courthouse. That was the day that I realized that that marriage was over and it was final. I remember just feeling a sense of great loss from all of it together, just the dam opened up and everything... just the loss of my dad, the loss of my husband... the two most significant people that I really longed to have love me were now no longer going to be doing that. So, that dream was gone. I really struggled after that with my faith. I struggled. I thought first of all that was just so ironic that both were on February 28th and I already grieved that day. I lost everything financially... my house, my belongings... but in the same tone, it was really an amazing thing because God began pursuing me, or maybe I just became aware that He was pursuing me because He had already been pursuing me... but all of a sudden that He was after me with great love. At every turn, I mean, I had someone providing something for me. A house... I found checks from an old company that I had been working for, commission checks, that I hadn't even been working and they sent me commission. Little by little, God just kept revealing Himself to me through these amazing things that He would do to provide for me and care for me and my family because I had four children. I began to see His mighty hand pursuing me and His love.

Pastor Steve: So, as you began to see that and the pursuit... what turned the corner? I mean, that's a lot for one person to have to go through. I mean, we've talked about the pornography, we talked about abuse, we talked about that shame and divorce... all those kinds of things that you were dealing with... how did that corner turn then?

Audrey: Well, I stumbled through that. It was quite a fog for a little while, but I do significantly remember there was a time when I realized how in bondage I was to anxiety and fear and shame. I just didn't believe that I could live free. I didn't even know what that looked like. I didn't even know what love really was because I always thought it included pain or rejection, so I really didn't understand even the concept of love. But God began to show me what love was... what unconditional love was. He began to reveal how

much He loved me. Literally, even though the prison door was open and I really was free to walk out, I just couldn't do it. So the Lord Jesus, He just came and sat in the prison cell with me.

Pastor Steve: Mmmm...

Audrey: He just began to reveal to me His great love, and He began to demonstrate that His love is stronger than the wounds and the scars and all the shame that I had accumulated over all this time, and He began to heal me... the deep healing that could never have been done any other way, if I had tried. So little by little, as He began to heal me, He and I were able to walk out of that prison cell together and experience real life. There are days that anxiety will still prick its head and I'll want to run back to my prison cell, but He just says, "Oh, no." He's showing me how to live free. He's pursued me and now I do know my identity is in Him, and I am His beloved. All of these years I was waiting for a man to rescue me, or someone to come rescue me, but after all, my Prince had already come to rescue me and that was Jesus. (Clapping)

Pastor Steve: So now what's it like to walk in that freedom?

Audrey: Every day is a joy to live free in Christ. It's to know that there is nothing that can separate me from that love and to know that I'm hidden in Him and that there is no way that He could ever leave me or forsake me or fail me. I can overcome because of Him, because He already overcame. (Clapping)

Pastor Steve: Audrey, to watch you walk in that freedom, to know from where you have come, is just an amazing miracle, and I praise God for the fact that He has delivered you and brought you out of that. We want to do something kind of different. Every person who shares their story, when they get to the end, they say their name... You know, "My name is ____..." and then they say, "...and this is my Freedom Story." Whenever they do that, we like to go crazy. Okay? So, the reason that we do that is because we are excited for you, but we are not even applauding you... we're applauding the saving grace of God and the fact that He delivers... so we'd like to do that. So would you say your name and tell us that this is your Freedom Story, and then we just want to give thanks to God.

Audrey: Yes. My name is Audrey and this is my Freedom Story. (Clapping and cheering)

Pastor Steve: So beautiful; thank you.

These guys are making it hard on me to preach. (Laughter) What an incredible story of God's grace. It's just incredible! (Clapping) Before we even start, I just want to say this. I know that in a room with this many people in it, there are people in this room right now who have abuse in their past or maybe in their present. Perhaps there are people in this room who struggle with an eating disorder or even pornography or a family member who is struggling with pornography. I want you to understand... I know that all of those things operate from a place within you that declares that you are shameful or that you are not good enough. So I want you to know that that is a lie from the enemy. And I want you to know that the truth is that you are a child of the King, in Jesus Christ, and you can walk and live as a child of the King today in faith. I want to encourage you, "Reject the lie and say 'Yes' to the freedom that comes in Jesus Christ." Let's pray and we'll begin.

"Father, we love You. God, how can we even begin to thank You for the fact that You bring deliverance? Lord, to those of us who are not righteous yet, You bring your righteousness, the righteousness of Jesus

Christ. Thank you, God. God, I pray that right now, as we open your Word, that You would pierce our hearts and speak to us, and God I pray today for deliverance. I know there are people in this room that need to be delivered. Lord, we don't want to leave here until You have done your work and You have delivered. God, we pray that that happens... not through a forceful communication, not through power of persuasion, not through argumentation... but Lord simply by the power of the cross of Jesus Christ. We lift your Name high. We give You praise and glory. Father, we love You. In the name of your Son Jesus Christ, we pray. Amen."

If you have your Bible, open it to Galatians 3 with me. If you don't have a Bible, that's alright. We'll have the Scripture up on the screen, and you can follow along in that way. As we're going through the Book of Galatians, we've come to a pretty difficult passage. We're going to read an entire chapter of Scripture. This is what we would call difficult prose. This is not easy to understand at first go, but we're going to work very diligently to unpack this together and to understand it. So if you read this and you get to the end of it and you say, "I have no idea what we just read..." that's okay. I feel pretty sure that we are going to come back and circle back through this a second time next week, because I'm not even sure that I completely understand everything there, but it's good and it's powerful. It's good strong stuff that we need. So I want to just read that with you, and we're going to enjoy this together.

Galatians 3: "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified. Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain? Does He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law or by hearing with faith—just as Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness?"

"Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

"For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, 'Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them.' Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for 'The righteous shall live by faith.' But the law is not of faith, rather 'The one who does them shall live by them.' Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree'—so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

"To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified. Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, 'And to offsprings,' referring to many, but referring to one, 'And to your offspring,' who is Christ. This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void. For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

"Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary. Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is One.

"Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law. But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

"Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian, for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise."

1. The Law (Religion) Makes Us Yearn For Faith. (v.19)

What does that mean? It means that we have the law, and we have the promise of faith... kind of a dichotomy that appears to be at odds with one another but actually Paul says, "No. The law works in conjunction with faith," and I want to try to explain how today. So to do this, I'm going to do something that works better for me to understand Galatians 3. I'm going to approach this passage in a little bit different order because it helps me to kind of break this down and really see what it is that is happening here. So I'm going to actually begin in Galatians 3:19, and then we're going to go back to the start of the chapter. Okay? So, why then the law? This is what Galatians 3 says, verse 19. *"Why then the law?" It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made..."*

I moved to Houston about a year ago. When I moved here, they have these signs. They're up everywhere here in Houston. They have two words on them. The words say, "Speed Limit," and then right under it there is a big number. So I deduced from these signs that this must tell me this is the limit to the speed at which I'm allowed to drive on this particular road. The large number, I'm assuming, corresponds to the speed on my speedometer, so therefore I'd be driving down the highway... "Speed Limit 70." So my understanding was 70 is as fast as I could go. So, my car has a cruise control and I accelerated to 70... I set my cruise on 70. I have discovered that the people of Houston have come together in a collective agreement, (Laughter) and they have said to the government officials of the State of Texas, "We appreciate your kindness and your consideration for our wellbeing and safety on these roads, but 70 simply will not do..." (Laughter) "...we have places to be. We are women and men of action." In the words of Sammy Hagar, "I can't drive 55"... or perhaps even 75. The first time that I set my cruise control on 70 on the Sam Houston Tollway, I literally felt as if I was taking my life into my own hands! (Laughter) People were driving past me and honking, giving me a special wave here in the city and saying, "You need to speed up!" (Laughter) It doesn't take long before you say, "The law must say 70, but 70 is going to get me killed..." (Laughter) "...so 80 it is." (Laughter) And you just jump in and you go, "Okay... yeah, you're right." That's a little bit of an exaggeration. Yes. I have driven faster than 70... than the posted speed limit, as many of you have, I'm assuming, as well. But the funny thing is that we love to do it; right? We have convinced ourselves, "It's not a big deal because everybody does it." I mean, everybody around us does it. Do you know what people who speed love to say? My dad taught me this phrase whenever I was a kid. "Son, you just pull on the highway, and you've just got to drive with the flow." Right? "With the flow." Everybody who speeds loves to go "with the flow." Right? Just go with the flow of traffic. Have you ever tried to use that explanation to an officer who has pulled you over? (Laughter) "Yes, officer; I was going 82 miles an hour. I understand the posted speed was 70, but I was going with the flow." (Laughter) For whatever reason, that has yet to be a convincing argument. Have you ever tried this argument as well... "Yes; I was going 82 but did you not see all the other cars around me that were also going 82?" And they'll say, "Yeah. Oh, I saw them but I got you." (Laughter) "You are the one that has been pulled over at this moment."

Why am I bringing this up? ...Because Paul is making a very important spiritual argument for us regarding the law. He is saying, "There are laws and we have broken them all." This is the funny thing. Many of us in this room have convinced ourselves... in fact, even deceived ourselves... that we can break the law that has been written in Scripture because we are simply "going with the flow." Yeah; we know what the Bible says about sexual purity, and we know what the Bible says about generosity, and we know what the Bible says about hatred in our heart, and we know what the Bible says about forgiveness... we know all of those things, but nobody else seems to be doing it. And so we just kind of get ourselves into the middle of the pack and hope that the radar gun doesn't get us as we go past. But here's the funny thing about that. God doesn't work like that. In fact, Paul says it himself. If you go back and you look in Galatians 3, starting in verse 10, "*For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written...*" Look at this. This is crazy. Look at verse 10: "*Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law and do them.*" In other words, if you have broken one law that is written in this Book, one law... what is your outcome? It says, "*You are cursed.*" Cursed. We don't throw that word around... like, you know, we say "cursed" and it's like "cussed." No, no, no. This is Shakespearean, almost, in scope. Do you remember... "A pox on both of your houses!" You know, that kind of a curse. It's even bigger than that. It is "You are cursed. You now receive death because you have broken a single law. If I live by the law, then I now am cursed under the law." This is the sad truth. Nobody ever can live up to every law... law of the land or law of the Book. It's just not possible. The weight of the law is too great.

This, in fact, is kind of my story. I grew up going to church. The joke in my day was I had a "drug" problem. "My parents drug me to church every time the doors were open..." (Laughter) "... and I went every Sunday morning; I went every Sunday night." Anybody out there remember Sunday night church? Yeah... that's right... Sunday night church. You all were at home watching "Murder She Wrote," and I was at Training Union. And some of you don't know what "Training Union" is; it's okay. It's just kind of like for us special holy people. I went to church on Wednesday night. I ate supper in the fellowship hall. I went to prayer meeting, then I had youth; I was in RA. I had a denim vest with gold piping. (Laughter) You should feel a little sorry for me right now... maybe, just a little bit. But I grew up in the church, and I loved that stuff. In fact, my testimony was often like that of the rich young ruler whenever Jesus confronted him and said, "You know the commandments." To which the rich young ruler replied, "Yes. All of those I have kept since I was a young boy." You see, going to church day in and day out, I became pretty good at keeping the law. I kept the rules; I knew them. I'd been taught them every day and I did them, and I began to deceive myself and actually think the same way that Paul was thinking in the passage prior to his justification in Christ by faith. I began to think, "I'm pretty good at keeping these rules." But here's the thing: No one can keep all of them. In fact, if you don't abide by every law, you are cursed. One day I was reading the Scripture... the Ten Commandments. I got to the tenth commandment that said, "Do not covet... don't want what your neighbor has." Man, I kind of just had this moment of spiritual clarity in which I realized, "I had coveted a lot of stuff in my life." I really had. I'd said, "Man, I wish I had his Xbox, and I wish I had her car, and I wish I had his girlfriend..." I mean, all these kinds of weird things that I had coveted in my heart. I began to sense my brokenness. That was just one of the Ten. As I started to really look back through the Ten, I was like, "Man, I really have not kept these. I have kept them in the way that other people around me have kept them." In other words, what I began to realize was that I was a law-keeper in the sense that I was "going with the flow" of my church. Everybody around me in church thought I was doing a great job because I was "going with the flow" that they had set, but even their flow was not the same flow that was listed in even just those Ten Commands. Then I flipped over to the Sermon on the Mount. I will never forget this. I read the Scripture that said, "Be ye perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Then I realized, "I can't be perfect. It couldn't happen." Impossible. Jesus says, "You have heard it said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I say unto you, anyone who looks at a woman lustfully

has committed adultery with her in his heart." And I realized, I have lusted. I am not perfect. You have heard it said... "You have heard it said, 'Do not murder;' but I say unto you, anyone who says to his brother, 'Rhaka' is in danger of the fires of hell." In other words, if I have hatred in my heart, if I say "You fool," to my brother or my friend, then I'm just as guilty as someone who has committed murder. All of this began to suddenly come upon me simultaneously, and I realized it didn't matter that I had "gone with the flow" of my church group my whole life. The Scripture said "I was under the weight of the law" and I was in trouble.

Why does God give the law? He gives it for a very specific reason. The law is not there to deliver us; the law is given to create a response, a reaction, within us. The law is given to make us yearn for something more. There are people here right now... you're a pretty good rule-follower. You are a do-gooder. People even call you things like that: "Do-gooder"—"Goody Two-Shoes." ...that kind of stuff. Guess what? You're still under the weight of the law. If you begin to believe that doing those good things will deliver you, it won't. You're under the weight of the law, and the law is given, Paul says, to make us yearn. It is placed there so that we can begin to realize that we are not able, under our self-effort... I cannot do enough. I am cursed. *"Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law and do them..."* And so he says, in verse 11, *"...it is evident that no one is justified."* How many people? No one; zero. There is no one in this room... there is no one in this world, that has ever been justified by the works of the law because you can't be that good. You can't be that good. And so he says, "the law was given." Now, it's not contrary. Look; back in verse 21: *"Is the law then contrary to the promise?"* No, no, no. He says it's not contrary. *"Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law."* In other words, if it was possible for us to live by that and obtain righteousness, then we could do that theoretically, but he knows that no one can. But, in verse 22, *"...the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe."* In other words, once you have that moment where you see, "I am condemned, I am cursed, I am under the weight of the law." When you have that moment that that happens, you start to say, "Going with the flow ain't enough. I need something else." Paul gives two examples: Verses 21 and 22. First he says that the law is like a prison guard. He stands there with a sword brandished. He says, "Yeah; you stay in there. You see your guilt. I want you to ponder it... to understand it." You will never be good enough, to do enough things to be delivered. You will never be justified because he just kind of stands there and looks at you and says, "You are under an execution sentence because of your inability to follow the law." Then he says the law is like a chaperone. My translation used the word "guardian." Why is it a guardian... and another couple of different words there? I don't know. I've heard about people who go on dates and they have a chaperone with them. That would be different; right? When you're there you're with the girl at the movie, but you don't really talk to them or touch them because your mom's right there. Why? Do you know why your mom is there? Not to make your date miserable... But then you get home and your mom says, "Hey; do you know what? It's better if you open the door for a young lady. That's the right way to treat her. You should compliment her on the way that she looks, because she got dressed up for you. That's a good way to be chivalrous and to demonstrate grace." So, a chaperone does that but then a guardian also does another thing. I want you to pretend this. If you were five years old and your millionaire parents died and they left you millions of dollars... at the age of five, you would not get to go out and buy all the Pixie Stix you wanted. (Laughter) Right? Why? Because you ain't old enough yet. You don't understand it. What would happen? The money would go into a trust, and there would be a guardian, a chaperone, over that trust, and they would oversee it, until the age that had been predetermined for you to get it. This is what Paul says, "Not only is the law like a guard that stands out there and says, 'You aren't good enough,' but the law is also like a guardian that says this, 'I'm going to start to push you in this right way, but you will finally, eventually, one day wake up and you'll say, 'Even though I can do a lot of this

stuff on my own, even though I'm a pretty smart person, a pretty capable person... I'm able to live out some of this on my own..." There will come a moment when you will say, "I can't do it all. I can't keep all these rules." And in that moment when you realize, "I'm able to sort of steer the boat in the right direction, but I can't keep it in a perfectly straight line..." On that day then the law can stop being your guardian because now you know you need something else. You need the training wheels taken off... you need the chaperone removed, and now you can step into what you were intended to receive the entire time. So what is that? It ain't the law; it's faith. That's what you were intended to have from the very beginning. It's something outside of the law. It's faith.

So in Galatians 3, what Paul then says is, "Faith is different than the law because the law creates a yearning within us... a yearning for something that is beyond us, something that we cannot do on our own... something that we could never attain of our own ability, and he says, "That thing is then faith."

2. Faith Makes Us Complete. (v. 3)

Galatians 3:3 says this: *"Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"* Ahh... perfected. The word is "epiteleo." "Teleo" is the Greek word for "goal"— for "end." This is what he says. "The law makes you yearn but faith gives you your 'epiteleo.'" What is that? The word means "complete."

Several years ago, I saw this movie called "Jerry Maguire." I don't know if you ever saw this movie, but at the end of it, Tom Cruise looks at Renee Zellweger and he's kinda got that weird and creepy stare that he does. He says, "You... complete me." He shakes a little bit when he says it. Like, wow... really intense emotion. And every woman in the theater, simultaneously, deeply sighed. "Uuuuhhhh." (Laughter) You know what? That emotion may sell a whole lot of movie tickets, but let me tell you... what Paul is saying is this. "There is nothing outside, in this world, that can ever complete you." The only thing that can complete you... that can give you your "epiteleo"... faith in Jesus Christ. Listen. Did you hear Audrey when she sat here and she said, "I kept waiting for a man in this world to come rescue me." And then she said, "I realized my Prince had already come and His name was Jesus." Whoa! So what's the point? Whatever you think completion is only comes through faith in Jesus Christ. Why? Because when you get faith, the Holy Spirit comes in you. You then hop out of the flow of the traffic of culture, and you hop into a new flow... the flow of the Holy Spirit. When you get into the flow of the Holy Spirit, guess what? You don't need training wheels to tell you what the law is anymore because when walking with the Spirit in grace, you're now in freedom. Guess what happens? You begin to know intuitively the right thing to do because you are responding to the grace that God has spoken over you in Jesus Christ. Jeremiah 31 says, "One day there will be a new covenant." He wrote this hundreds of years before Christ, when the Jews were still in exile. He says, "'There will come a day,' declares the Lord, 'when I will write my law on the hearts of all people.'" In other words, they will know through the Spirit, the living Spirit of God... right and wrong and they will begin to sense it because they will respond to grace.

Now... does that mean that we don't need Scripture? No, no, no. I'm not saying that. The spirit works in conjunction with Scripture. Am I saying that teaching isn't important? No, no, no. That's not what I'm saying. What I'm saying is this: It is that you no longer begin to feel the weight of the law as condemnation but instead you go, "I see the righteousness and the holiness God was pushing me toward, but I understand I could never get there all the way." So what happens now? Now, by faith, by trusting that all of my sin, all of my brokenness, all of my shame, all of my addictions, all of my problems, all of my issues, all of my insecurities... have been lifted off of me and have been crucified to the cross. And when that happens now, I walk with the Spirit. (Clapping) So when that happens now, I am completed, and Paul says,

"Miracles do not come... miracles do not come by works of the law." Do you want to see a miracle? You have faith in Christ. In other words, what he's saying is "Look, I don't care that you did ten holy things in a row... I don't do miracles just because you did ten holy things in a row. Miracles come to those who walk by faith... who see and understand justification comes only by faith in Jesus Christ and that all of my sin has been crucified to the cross. And the miracle even, in this situation, is that I've been justified. I'm a sinner. I'm broken. I deserve nothing. I deserve punishment. I deserve hell and damnation and instead I get life, and the Spirit, and the miracle of justification. Bam... that's huge. And He declares then, after that, that you're not just completed. So you get this complete human experience. Think about that. You don't even get complete human experience until you experience Jesus Christ in faith. Once that happens, then you get the Spirit, and now you know what you were intended to have as a human being. Think about that. Human experience isn't complete... "epiteleo"...until you get the Spirit.

3. Faith Makes Us Righteous. (v. 6)

Then in verse 6: "...Just as Abraham *believed God and it was counted to him as righteousness.*" So wait a minute. So why does that matter? Well, he's saying, "It's not enough that you are completed, but it's then... even beyond that... that then you are made righteous in that. So we talked about this last week: Righteousness, justification... it means "you're free to go." It's the opposite of condemnation. What is that about? Well, if you go back and you read Genesis 12, you'll start to see that Abraham has a moment where he trusts God and he goes and off and he goes on this journey. When that happens, the Bible says, "*Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.*" What does that mean?

I think that a lot of us, when we read it, intuitively what we think is this: Abraham trusted God and God liked that a whole lot. (Laughter) ...and He was really, really happy because Abraham believed Him. No... that is not what that says. Too many people confuse faith with believing in God. Listen, ninety percent of Americans believe in God. Okay? That doesn't mean that they are walking in faith. That doesn't mean that they have been justified by faith. James chapter 3 says it as well. "*The demons know His name and shudder.*" They believe in God. It's not enough to believe IN God. It is to believe ON God. It is to put my trust IN God. It is to have faith in God. What does that mean? It means that I believe that He has taken everything in me that is broken and in need of redemption, and He's placed it on the cross. Everything...everything. And then faith is walking in that reality. Listen. I don't know if you remember this. It says that Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness. It means, in that moment, God saw Abraham as righteous. Okay... are you ready? "*Credited to him as righteousness.*" That's an accounting term, by the way. He took the payment... He credited it to his account... He leased to own... all that money was forwarded... Boom... it dropped on Abraham. "You get all the righteousness right now. I see the righteousness of My Son Jesus on you, Abraham." Guess what? Then he tried to give his wife away twice. Right? I mean, what a dirty dog! (Laughter) God saw Abraham's faith... it was credited to him as righteousness, and then he tried to give his wife away twice. Then he also had a child with another woman who wasn't his wife that wasn't the child of the promise. Okay? Think about all this. But God still declared him "friend" and still declared him "righteous," even though he did that stuff after he had been made righteous by faith. Some of us are like, "Why would God do that?" I'll tell you why God did that... because you're a bunch of dirty dogs too... and so am I. Here's the thing. I could never live up to the standard of God's holiness on my own. This is what faith-producing righteousness means. It's that whenever I come to faith in Jesus Christ, whenever that happens, and tomorrow I'm a dirty dog, I'm still seen as righteous in the eye of God. Now, does that mean that I get a license to do whatever I want to? No! It means that I now have the Holy Spirit in me, and I walk in that freedom. Do I sometimes, like Audrey said, want to jump back in that jail cell? Yeah, I do. And then Jesus said, "Nope, come out." I don't live in my sin any longer. I

live in the freedom of Christ. So righteousness comes because now I begin to apply the Gospel to my life, every single day. Too many churches have declared, either intentionally or unintentionally... "Once you get your act cleaned up, then you can come into our church." That's not what justification by faith is. Do you know what justification by faith is? "You're a messed up person right now, but you're turning to Jesus Christ in faith and guess what? You're welcome. It doesn't matter how messed up you are."

I was in Montana this week. It was cold there, by the way... negative 40 the first morning I woke up in Montana. Yeah. That, to me... well surely my app here is broken... Negative 40! That's crazy! (Laughter) I started cutting open the tauntauns and throwing people in the middle of them. They knew it was bad... it was cold out there. Three of y'all got that. (Laughter) Okay. Go home and watch "The Empire Strikes Back" with your kids; it will be alright. (Laughter) I'm telling you, it was so cold when I was there this week, but I was talking to these guys, these pastors... I was up there teaching an Old Testament class for World Hope Bible Institute... and this one pastor, pastors on a Native American reservation, and he was having a conversation with a 19-year-old Indian girl. He was asking her, "Do you go to church anywhere?" And she said, "Oh, I can't go to church." He said, "Why?" She kind of hemmed and hawed and wouldn't say and then finally she said, "I can't because I'm attracted to other girls." He said, "Are you living in that... are you walking in that?" "No, but I just struggle with it, and I know, until I get that worked out in my own life, I would never be accepted in the eyes of God." Listen... that's a false gospel. We cannot implicitly or explicitly ever teach or proclaim that. Today, if you are in this room and you struggle with any sin... I don't care what it is... I don't care how broken... I don't care what your addiction is that you're hiding from your spouse... I don't care what it is that you are fighting right now... Listen. You are not perfect today. I will understand that, but you can be seen as perfect in righteousness through the blood of Jesus Christ today through faith. (Clapping) Now, is God going to leave you there? NO! That's what sanctification is. Right? He's then going to drag you kicking and screaming through the power of His Spirit and He's going to change you. Some of us that are saved are changed (claps once) overnight. Other people... it's a long haul. But guess what? God's grace has its way anyway. That's the way that it works. So what we've got to start doing is proclaiming, "Salvation comes by faith in Christ alone." I trust that no matter my brokenness, no matter my sin, no matter my issue... it has been crucified with Christ, and now I don't live but Christ lives in me. That's what I need. And then, as with Abraham, I'm made righteous.

4. Faith Makes Us Covenant-ed. (v. 29)

So, Paul gets to the end... well the end in the order that we're doing it... in verse 16: "*Now, the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring.*" So if you go back and you read Genesis 12, He makes His promise to an offspring... not to offsprings. Who is the singular offspring? It is not Isaac but it is the child that comes in the line of Isaac... it's Jesus. And he says, "So, through the offspring, the covenant, the promise is made." Do you remember what the covenant that God made with Abraham? "*Through you, all people of the world shall be blessed.*" How did that happen? Through his offspring who was... Jesus. All people are now blessed through Abraham, through his offspring, who is Jesus. In other words, this is what then Paul says, "Look. Some of you guys think you're only justified by doing good stuff. The law that you believe came 430 years after Abraham. Moses went to Mount Sinai, got the Commandments, 430 years after God said this to Abraham. Does that make God's promise to Abraham null and void? Uhh-uhh... No! The promise still stands. God saw his faith and credited it to him as righteousness. That same promise is here. So guess what? Those of us who don't even know the law or who are in opposition to the law, who stand condemned under the law, can still have the same freedom that Abraham got. Guess what? We just jump back before the law was ever created... we go into the first covenant... Genesis 12. How does that happen? Guess what? We go into the offspring, Jesus Christ. And when that happens, we get the same

covenant that Abraham got which means we are justified by faith. We get "covenant-ed" whenever that happens.

So, the end of Galatians 3. So what happens? Now we go to verse 23: "... before faith came, we were held captive under the law..." Right? "...imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed. So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came..." We talked about this. Verse 25: "...but now that faith has come..." Now that Jesus has come, we can have faith and we can be justified IN faith, "...But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian..." They said, "Okay, here's your inheritance... You get all the money in the trust now. Here you go!" Verse 26: "...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God." Now wait... half of the room says, "But what about us? We're daughters. Why does he only say "sons"? I'm going to tell you. It is not because Paul is a misogynist. This is why: Because in Hebrew culture, only one gender got the inheritance... the men. Only the sons got the inheritance. But Paul says, "Guess what? That doesn't apply anymore. In this culture, once you're brought into the covenant, it doesn't matter if you're a man or a woman... every person is treated as a first-born son. You now get the same inheritance that was promised to the offspring of Abraham. Every person gets a full share." You're brought in. Every person gets a full inheritance. That's why we're all sons of God... How? ...Through faith. So, verse 27: "For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ." In other words, if you have said "Yes" to Jesus Christ in faith, you have Christ On you, you're IN Christ, you're In the covenant. Guess what? You get a full inheritance. So, verse 28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek..." In other words, it doesn't matter what color you are, you get a full inheritance. "...there is neither slave nor free..." It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, you still get a full inheritance in Christ. It doesn't matter how much education you have. You still get a full inheritance in Christ. "...there is no male and female..." You're ALL sons of God. You're ALL in line for an inheritance. "...for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Verse 29: "And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring..." You're in the One... you're in the offspring. You are in the covenant and then therefore you are "...heirs according to the promise." Guess what? Ladies and gentlemen, once you say "Yes" to Jesus Christ in faith, you get all the riches of the inheritance. You are an adopted daughter... you're an adopted son. You get everything. You're brought into relationship with God. He pours out ALL His riches... ALL His grace comes on you. Not a little bit... not most... not part... Every single bit comes on you! That's awesome. (Clapping)

And we walk around saying, "Man, only two more weeks of Downton Abbey left." (Laughter) No, no, no. We don't walk around saying, "Man, I'm really feeling down today." No, no, no. Guess what? We walk as a champion conquerer child of God because it has been declared by Scripture. So when everybody else tells you, "You're a liar, you're a phoney, you're a failure, you're no good... no one ever wanted you... you were an accident..." No. None of that is true because there is one truth. You are an heir... you are a child of God, once you've turned to God in faith through Jesus Christ. That is beautiful. We need to turn to that today. So, some of us today need to say "Yes" to Jesus in faith. Some of us today need to say "No" to the law and stop trying to earn by our own self-keeping. And some of us just need to celebrate what God is doing and walk in that truth. Amen? Amen!! (Clapping) So, let's pray.

"God, thank You for Your gift, thank You for Your grace, and thank You for the covenant that was given to Abraham. God, thank You for the fact that somehow, through a miracle, we're brought into that same covenant; and, God, I pray now that we would respond to that in faith... Father, that we would worship You in fullness and holiness... God, that we would say 'Yes' to You, that we would step into Your grace, that we would respond to Your grace, that we would do so, not trying to earn it but just having faith...that You have taken all of our sin, all of our brokenness, and You have crucified it with Christ. God we love You. We thank You and we praise You, in the name of Jesus Christ, the crucified and Holy One. Amen and Amen."